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FOREIGN RELATIONS

Uncloaked Judgment

The Western mind South Viet Nam's political war, as symbolized last week by another case of Buddhist self-immolation, seems even uglier than the bloody war.

Helicopters can be shot down, young men from Wyoming and Rhode Island can die in Viet Nam's jungles without rousing more than passing attention, but the thought of a human making such of himself to protest political oppression is so shocking as to arouse passion and emotion in most Americans.

It is no longer that emotion might easily cloud the judgment of Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and Joint Chiefs Chairman Maxwell Taylor during their intensive seven-day inspection of South Viet Nam. But it didn't. When they return to Washington next week, what emerged from their report to President Kennedy was a U.S. policy statement that seems both sensible and firm.

It starts from the statement:

"The security of South Viet Nam is a major interest of the United States, as of other free nations. We will adhere to our policy of working with the people and government of South Viet Nam to deny this country to Communism."

"The military program in South Viet Nam has made progress and is sound in principle, though improvements are being energetically sought."

"Secretary McNamara and General Taylor reported their judgment that the major part of the United States military task can be completed by the end of 1965."

"They reported that by the end of this year the United States program for training Vietnamese should have progressed to the point where 1,000 United States military personnel assigned to Viet Nam can be withdrawn."

"The political situation in South Viet Nam remains deeply serious. The United States has made clear its continuing opposition to any repressive actions in South Viet Nam. While such actions have not yet significantly affected the military effort, they could do so in the future."

What did all this mean? Three major conclusions could be drawn:

1. Winning the war against the Communist Viet Cong comes first. The U.S. therefore will continue to string along



TAYLOR & McNAMARA WITH THE PRESIDENT

Winning the war comes first.

with South Viet Nam's Diem regime, if only for the reason cited last week by the New York Herald Tribune in recalling an Al Smith quote: "You don't change barrels while going over Niagara Falls."

► Forcing the Diem regime to reform itself remains a major aim of U.S. policy. But apparently abandoned is the notion that this can be accomplished by words, by critical television statements or denunciatory whispers to newsmen. Instead, there is every indication that the U.S. now intends to bring quiet but steady and substantive pressures on the Diem government. Under way are White House studies of the possibility of rearranging aid shipments to South Viet Nam so as to cut down on everything that is not essential to the military effort against the Viet Cong.

► Ending bitter disputes among personnel of various U.S. agencies—particularly the State Department, the Pentagon, and the Central Intelligence Agency—about policy toward Viet Nam is a must. Last week the Administration made clear that, except for the actual conduct of military operations, Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge is the man in charge of all U.S. efforts in South Viet Nam. The first test of Lodge's authority came quickly. At his request, Washington recalled John Richardson, chief

CIA representative in South Viet Nam. All agreed that Richardson had handled a hard job efficiently. But his operations had become too "exposed," and his continued presence hampered Lodge's new get-tough approach.

In setting a 1965 deadline for victory in the bullet battle against the Viet Cong, the Administration was not necessarily making a military judgment. Such a judgment would be unrealistic. After all, wars against jungle guerrillas are almost always long, nasty affairs; it took twelve years for the British and Malaysians to subdue Communist guerrillas in Malaya. But the apparent deadline did have a shrewd political aim. It served notice that if the Diem regime does not reform itself, the U.S. can fairly say: You, and not the U.S., are responsible for the failure to achieve victory—and you cannot accuse the U.S. of not having given you every chance.

A Display of Affection

When Ethiopia's Emperor Haile Selassie pleaded gallantly but in vain for League of Nations help against the invading troops of Benito Mussolini in 1936, the wiry little Lion of Judah won the affection of the U.S. That continuing affection was displayed throughout the Emperor's official state visit to the U.S. last week. He was applauded

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